

Realistic Job Preview: Child Protective Service Worker

Maggie Bishop, Director of NH Div. of Children, Youth and Families: Thank you for interest in applying for a Child Protective Service Worker with the Division for Children, Youth, and Families. This video is created in an effort for you to help you understand what's involved in being a Child Protective Worker here in New Hampshire. Like many other state agencies across the country, we've begun to value the importance of effective recruitment in retaining a solid workforce. We hope this video will help to answer some basic questions and to help you understand the roles and responsibilities of our organization.

DCYF is the agency in New Hampshire required to respond to child abuse and neglect concerns and we do this through two major functions: assessment and family service. The assessment worker is a short-term, fast-paced interaction with families in an effort to determine if there is abuse and neglect. A family service worker develops relationships and provides case management supports to help remedy the concerns that brought a family to our attention. As you watch this video, please remember that regardless of the role you choose, in addition to having a bachelor's degree, all staff need to have organizational skills, they need to be somewhat independent, and to be able to communicate to have those difficult conversations with families and with children. Working in child protection is not the right choice for everyone. But if it's the right choice for you, there is nothing more rewarding than the opportunity to impact the life of a child and nothing more important than saving the life of a child.

Brunette young woman: The baby didn't go home with Mom and Dad; they had some pretty serious ongoing drug issues that still to this day haven't been resolved.

Blonde woman: She asked the doctor to make a report because her Dad had assaulted her, choked her, and suffocated her.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: On the weekends, the kids were made to stand in the corner, and if they moved or made a sound they would get whipped.

- (Classical Music Playing accompanied by picture of a boy smiling) -

Sherri, Supervisor: Sometimes people underestimate the depth of the problems that our clients have and the impact that's going to have on them. Sometimes people have, you know depending on their own personal history that they bring to this work, they may not ever have had exposure to many of the things that now they're going to have exposure to.

Dark-haired Woman with Headset: So we're not, we're not sure of the age of the child...

Older woman with headset: Do you have the name of that child?

Brunette woman with ponytail and headset: You lied to the police because he was afraid of... getting beaten up?

Female Narrator: All reports of alleged child abuse and neglect in New Hampshire are received through the Central Intake Office, if the report's accepted it's immediately sent to a local office to be assigned to an assessment worker so an investigation of the allegations can begin.

Tammy, Intake Worker: We get all types of reports from you know neglect calls, to sexual abuse calls, to physical abuse calls. It fluctuates on the ages of children; you know we get calls on newborns, we calls up to the child's eighteen years of age.

Brunette woman with ponytail and headset: Did he say whether or not he's witnessed any other domestic violence with his parents?

Female Narrator: An assessment worker interviews children, parents, and household members. They also talk to doctors, school staff, police, counselors, and others who may be involved with the family. It's short-term and fast-paced to determine what action may be necessary.

Jennifer, Assessment Worker: There is no schedule to my day; honestly, everyday could be different as an assessment worker. Some days I have scheduled appointments and I'm meeting with families. There are some days I don't know what I'm doing until I come in and am handed an emergency report and need to go out.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: From the moment I stepped in, I loved what I did and it was fast-paced. It was different everyday you know I wasn't sitting all day, I wasn't you know on the move all day, it was just lots of everything. (Pause, change from interview setting to meeting setting) I went out to the home last night and the little boy had scratches over his eye and he had a bruise. Because of the ongoing domestic violence and the little boy will be stepping off the bus in probably about two hours with Mom's boyfriend, so that's very concerning...

Woman with glasses: Okay, well...

Woman in black shirt at desk: And I did just talk to the police, just before you came in, and they had a call from a neighbor last night who was concerned because they heard a lot of screaming and banging.

Woman with glasses: I think based on the photographs and what you've told me, I think we have enough to obtain a court order.

Amanda: You know court is never easy; it's something that you have to, to practice. It's something that you have to watch, it's something that you have to shadow. The first few times are not easy and you have to remember that it's not personal.

- (In courtroom) -

Woman in glasses: The department would like to call CPSW Amanda Jewel to the stand.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: He has spoken about fighting in the home, lots of screaming and yelling, he's also talked with me about physical abuse on his mom.

Woman in glasses: Your honor, at this point the department would request that the court issue an order of protection removing Ms. Jones' boyfriend.

Female Judge: Based on the evidence that I've heard today and the child's disclosures, I will be issuing an order of protection removing the mom...

Sherri: We, we have a, a really great mentoring program that helps people with that so they're not just sort of thrown in there on their first day you know by themselves by any means. And we have a lot of training and we have a lot of supports, but even still at the end of the day at some point you've gotta go knock on a door by yourself. And if you aren't someone who can bring yourself to some level of comfort in doing that, then this job's not for you.

Amanda, Assessment Worker with an officer: (knocking on door)

Brunette young woman: I am always nervous knocking on doors, that moment when you're knocking and waiting to see if someone's going to respond. I'm always nervous you know no matter how many times I do it. You don't know what's, what's behind the door.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: I've never been greeted by a parent that was happy to see me and initially when I first started, that's uncomfortable and it can be pretty intense.

- (Amanda and officer outside a home) –

Amanda, Assessment Worker: I'm here to talk to you about your son...he's okay but we have a concern about his safety and a concern about yours as well. We have a court order to remove your boyfriend from the home. Is he here right now?

Mother: Yes, but what right do you have to come into my home and remove him out of the home? That's not...

- (Back to interview setting) –

Amanda, Assessment Worker: You know what we do isn't easy, but we do have a lot of support and there's a lot of tools we have to utilize that support and great people to work with, lots of services.

Sherri, Supervisor: It's not something you can pick up a book and read it and then say "okay, it says here I need to do this, so this is how I'm gonna do it." It's not that kind of a job. There's much more gray than that, there's much more need to think to be able to generalize from general instructions to this specific situation.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: There is no typical day and it's very very fast-paced; there's a lot of pressure and you need to become adept at juggling and reprioritizing. You know sometimes, hourly.

Woman in black shirt: ...about an urgent report that we're gonna need to go out on this afternoon.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: Okay.

- (Kyle and little girl at a table) –

Kyle, Assessment Worker: Is there a reason why somebody might be worried about you or your brothers or your sisters?

Little girl: Uh-uh...

Kyle, Assessment Worker: No?

- (Back to interview setting) –

Kyle, Assessment Worker: It's powerful to, sit down with a child and to let them know "I believe you" and "that, what's happening to you, I do not think that's okay."

Female Narrator: The family service worker's job involves determining what services might help a family get where they need to be in order to have their children safely at home. This is longer term involvement that builds a relationship with the family.

Jason, Supervisor: It really comes down to identifying what the family's needs are and identifying what service is best suited to meet that family's need. Some families have more needs than other families; some families have higher risk and more risk factors to deal with than other families, but really the family service worker, is there to help identify, and coordinate, and manage those services, and monitor the quality of that service delivery, and to make sure the family's needs are being met effectively.

Candace, Family Service Worker: I remember having to tell a five and seven year old, that the judge decided that instead of returning home to their birth family that they're gonna be adopted by the family they're living with now.

Adele, Family Service Worker: No one person decides anything like that for the children, it's generally a group decision; where a child's place initially, if a child needs to be moved, should visits be supervised or not, you know what degree is appropriate for them seeing their parents. A lot of it is a group decision which I think protects the agency

as well as the children, because no one person's personal belief or judgment or you know any of that is what decides the fate of a child.

- (Meeting setting) –

Woman in pink shirt: We are reviewing “Hannah” for today's PPT.

Woman in red blouse: And the foster mom is coming with me to, visit the biological parents in jail and start that connection and start getting them...(trails off)

- (Back to interview setting) –

Adele, Family Service Worker: Children will always love their parents and they'll always want to know in one way or another where they are, or what had happened. The, there'll always be something of that, and that you need to respect that.

Candace: You have to be able to put your own bias aside and not be opinionated, but really focus on understanding that the need of the child is to be with their family and to belong.

Adele: There's no room for judgment in this job at all for what happens. The things that parents have sort of forced their children to endure, some of it, it's horrific and there's no other word for it. But you can't, you can't judge the, the parents for it, you can't look at the children simply as victims; you keep those things in mind, but they're still people who you want to prepare to help make it out there in the world. So, feeling sorry for them, or those types of emotions don't benefit the kids in any way.

- (Kyle and little girl at a table) –

Kyle: Are you, are you worried about me talking to your mom and dad about anything?

Little girl: Uh-uh

Candace, Family Service Worker: A person who should take this job should have a passion, and a heart, and a desire to um make change in this world, in your community.

Sherri, Supervisor: This is not a part-time position; it's actually a more than full-time position is the way that I phrased it to them and I think that that's very accurate. I mean certainly there are hours and you know you're not gonna be worked to death, but this is a position that will be a huge part of your life. This is not some place that you go and then leave it there then come home at 4:30.

Brunette young woman: There's definitely days I go home and I curse my job up and down um, but I would say more often than not yes, I like my job; I'm happy with the work that I do.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: I absolutely love my job. I love it. And I love it because there are so many different things about it that make it positive. And it's again, working with those families that need your support; it's seeing the reunifications when children go back home.